No 32 J. #8
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Inaugural Dissertation

On Passed March 14th. 1826

Mania à Potu.

Submitted to the Examination of the Reverend Provost, Trustees, & Medical Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania - For the Degree of Doctor of Medecine.

By

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Of Savannah. Georgia. -

1825.

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Mania a Potu. 1.

The embarassment & difficulty of selecting a subject for a medical Thesis amidst the variety which must attract the attention of the student who has been engaged in preparing himself as a candidate for a degree, & whose knowledge of them is principally confined to what he has been able to derive from books & lectures, can only be equalled by that of treating the subject he has been fortunate enough to decide on, in a manner most suitable to the occasion, & the best which attending circumstances will admit. Of this embarassment it has been my lot to experience no inconsiderable share, & after much hesitation I have mentioned on a subject involved in much obscurity, but not the less interesting to the medical profession. Although I cannot hope to present any thing novel or original,

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I trust I shall not fail to show at least that I have endeavoured to understand the views which have been taken of it by those who have turned their attention to it more particularly, & have had ample opportunity & ability for its investigation; & that I have not been altogether inattentive to the cases which have come under my notice during my attendance at the Alms-house & Hospital.

The contemplation of humanity while labouring under any of the innumerable forms of disease with which it is beset, must ever be a source of pain to the mind of sensibility & sympathy. Who can mark without emotion the blighted form of youth & beauty; the cheek which but yesterday was flushed with health, & vied with the rose in freshness, now pale & wan; the eye which sparkled with the fire of youth, & beamed forth

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with unclouded brightness, now closed & sunken; the lips which gave utterance to the merry sounds of wit & humour, or the tender voice of love, now silent & livid; the bosom which beat high with joy & hope, now oppressed with grief & despair? Who can contemplate such a spectacle, without dropping a tear over the frailty of human excellence & loveliness? To witness such scenes must ever affect even the stoicest; but every day's experience is continually presenting them to our view, & teaches us to consider them the necessary concomitants of the frail tenement we inhabit. We are consoled in a measure by the reflection that the most beautiful & lovely form is the creature of a moment, that it must necessarily soon fade away, & be converted into those gross materials of which it is composed; that there is an immortal &

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immaterial principle within to which it owes all its excellence, & which will survive long after this form shall have crumbled to its mother earth. With this cheering reflection we are enabled often to bear up against some of the very worst evils which assail ourselves & friends. But when we behold disease not content with ravaging the body & laying waste some of the most beautiful objects in nature, extending its baneful influence to the mind itself, dethroning reason from her empire, & prostrating to a most deplorable state those faculties, which when under proper control, & directed by a sound judgement, constitute man the noblest work of the creation, & preeminently distinguish him above all other orders of creatures, we feel as if we were deprived of our last & firmest support, & as if there were no

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more left whereon to rest our hopes of the future. Happy for humanity however, there is, even in these circumstances, yet one resource to which we may look with no small degree of confidence, & which very often affords relief in the most trying scenes. The Medical Art has furnished means by which many, very many, have been rescued from this most wretched state. And well may we exclaim in the words of the great Rush, "Blessed Science! which thus extends its friendly influence not only over the evils of the bodies, but over those of the minds of the children of men!"

Could man have remained in that original, simple state, & confined himself to those habits which nature doubtless intended for him, & in which she placed him; could he have been content to breathe the pure air of the mountain, instead of the infect-

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ed atmosphere of the city, depending upon the roots & berries of the forest for his nourishment, & the running brook for his drink, he would unquestionably never have been acquainted with a host of diseases which are now the scourge of his race. His body braced by healthful exercise would have braved unhurt the vicissitudes of the seasons, & his mind unruffled by passion would have remained calm & undisturbed by care.

There is probably no disease to which the preceding observation is more applicable, than that which is the subject of our present consideration. It has originated entirely in the progress of luxury & refinement, & is the consequence of the introduction of a poison which invariably attends their march. The baneful effects which have resulted from the intemperate use

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of ardent spirits have been too frequently dwelt on to render any very elaborate disquisition on the subject necessary at this time. Without adverting to its demoralising influence, there are not only numberless diseases of which it is the specifick cause; but it exposes the system to attacks of diseases which it would otherwise escape, & tends in an eminent degree to baffle the efforts of practitioners in their treatment. The disease which we are about to consider is one of its own peculiar offspring, it alone lays the foundation, & is the sole remote cause of it. Although however, this is sufficient to furnish a remote cause, & there were is any other, the exciting causes are numerous. The seeds of the disease being sowed, & the system brought to that state which an abuse of these stimuli invariably occasions, numberless accidents may call it into

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action; a wound, a fracture, or any comparatively slight injury may be the means of ushering it in with all its terrors.

The persons who are the subjects of this disease are those who are addicted to the use of alcoholic stimuli to an intemperate degree, either occasionally or habitually; more frequently the latter.

The effect of these stimuli on the system is, to elevate it above the natural standard, & this elevation is always followed by a corresponding depression equally far below this standard, as soon as their operation has ceased. When therefore, persons of the above description have suffered themselves to stimulate more freely than usual for a longer or shorter time, & then return to their usual habits, either abandoning entirely the use of stimuli, or indulging with more moder

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ation, the system is left in a state of depression extremely inviting to disease, & they are seized with a train of symptoms of a most distressing nature, which are followed by the disease in question.

The symptoms which have been observed first to make their appearance, & which are the immediate precursors of the disease, are such as denote great derangement in the digestive apparatus, together with all the evil consequences of it. The countenance becomes very much altered, there is a wildness & quickness of look, with an expression of anxiety. There is indigestion, oppression at the pit of the stomach, nausea, & sometimes retching & vomiting; the bowels sometimes relaxed, at other times constipated, together with pain & uneasiness in the head. The tongue is furred, but generally moist; the pulse is variable, generally more

+ Cold Hands

frequent than natural, but easily compressed. The skin is sometimes hot & dry, usually however moist, & of a natural temperature. There is also most commonly a trembling of the hands & often also of the knees. The mind often manifests some derangement from the commencement; the patient imagines he hears strange noises, manifests great concern for his personal safety, is extremely restless & unable to sleep, so that it is with great difficulty he can be induced to lie down.

As the disease advances, the delirium increases, & becomes constant night & day, & the wakefulness is incessant. The delirium in these cases sometimes resembles more or less that in Mania; the patient vociferates loudly, pulls his bed to pieces, & throws it about the room; he is often seized with paroxysms of inconceivable strength, which however, are succeeded by great muscular relaxation & las-

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titude. Generally however, the mind exhibits great timidity, & is harassed by fearful apprehensions. The patient imagines that every one about him is engaged in working his destruction; he sees objects which are not present, as specks on the wall or in the atmosphere, rats & mice running about his apartment, & over his bed; he picks at his bed cloths, & is continually moving his bed from one part of the room to the other, in fear lest the house or some great weight fall on him. These last symptoms are so often found to accompany the disease, that they are almost sufficient of themselves to determine its character without any thing else.

If the disease is suffered to go on as it has commenced, without interruption, all the symptoms are aggravated, & the approach of dissolution is soon manifest. The evacuations are passed involuntarily; the skin becomes

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cool & clammy, sometimes covered with profuse sweat; the pulse is exceedingly rapid & feeble, & the countenance dull. These symptoms are either followed by convulsions, which soon terminate life, or insensibility succeeds, with Coma & Apoplexy, followed by death.

This disease may continue with violence for three days or a week; sometimes with more moderation for a longer time, partaking somewhat of a chronic form.

There is no part of this subject which is involved in more obscurity, & which is less understood by practitioners than that which relates to the precise state of the system, or the proximate cause, which gives rise to the train of symptoms above described. We are informed by Dr. Sutton in his essay on this subject, that when the disease first made its appearance in the neighbourhood where he resided;

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in consequence of the similarity of the symptoms to those of idiopathic Phrenitis, it was considered as essentially the same by the generality of practitioners; as consisting in a high degree of inflammation of the brain & its membranes, & requiring copious depletion, rubefacients, sponging &c. as usually recommended in that disease. He says that he himself was at first of this opinion, & treated it accordingly; but from the want of success which he met with, & the very great success with which the disease was treated by another set of practitioners, who had learnt from experience to take a different view of it, & who pursued a very different plan of treatment, he was induced to change his opinions, & at last fell upon the proper practice.

The resemblance which this disease bears in many respects both to Phrenitis & Mania,

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might very well have induced physicians at first sight to consider their pathology the same; but besides that the treatment which has been found adapted to "Mania à Potu", most conclusively contradicts this, there are some points of difference in the symptoms which generally attend, which may very well assist in determining the diagnosis. According to Dr. Sutton, this disease (which he calls "Delirium Tremens") does not commence so suddenly as Phrenitis; but it may often be learnt that the disease has been coming on for some time. There is not the intolerance of light which generally attends the latter. And the tremors which usually accompany the former, are seldom observed in Phrenitis. The state of the mind, although sometimes resembling that in genuine Mania, is generally different. The mind here is usually occupied & disturbed about

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private affairs, & exhibits great timidity with respect to every person & thing, & does not retain the remembrance even of what has immediately transpired. The author just referred to likewise observes, that Dr. Saunders thinks there is something peculiar in the motion of the hands in this disease, "as if the patient might with imperfect vision, be searching for things, & occasionally rapidly catching & avoiding them."

The dissections which have been made in this disease do not prove as satisfactorily as might be desired, what is exactly the combination of circumstances on which the phenomena observed depends. Marks of disease have been discovered in various parts of the body; the brain & its membranes, the parts which would of course first attract the attention, have been found in a state of congestion, the veins being congested. This ap-

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pearance however, can scarcely have any concern in the production of the disease, it must rather be a consequence of it, occurring immediately before death, hence arise the symptoms of Apoplexy which are usually present at that period.

The viscera of the abdomen are likewise found in various states of disease. The Stomach is disorganised, contracted, & scirrhous; the Liver variously congested, inflamed, hardened tuberculated, & sometimes contracted, at other times enlarged.

These appearances are always produced by a long & immoderate use of alcoholic stimuli, they are indeed sufficient to produce very great derangement in all the functions; but if they were immediately & solely concerned in the production of the attendant symptoms, it might be supposed that the approach & progress of these symptoms would keep

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face with that of the condition in which these viscera are found, & wherever this condition existed, the same phenomena would be produced. On the contrary however, we observe the disease under consideration to make its appearance in persons who are accustomed to an undue use of stimuli, & in them after a debauch, or drunken frolic; & when they have either abandoned their use entirely, or are more moderate in their indulgence. Besides, persons of this description have been examined after death, in whom the viscera were found in the same diseased state, & who never had an attack of this disease.

From these considerations, we cannot but acknowledge that the appearances which are presented on examination of these cases, do not sufficiently account for the phenomena observed, & we must look farther for a

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proximate cause. The state of the system here induced, is certainly a peculiar one; a state of excitement has been brought about, in the production of which there has been an immense expenditure of nervous power; a correspondent depression succeeds necessarily; the energies of the system are completely prostrated, & great functional derangement is the consequence. The functions of the brain are here very deeply involved; the vibrations which it returns to the impressions of external objects, instead of creating in the mind those just ideas & conceptions which always exist in a state of health, give rise to the wildest & most unconnected which could possibly be imagined.

As has been before observed, the treatment which was pursued in this disease on its first appearance, was such as was warranted by the erroneous views which were taken of its

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pathology, from its resemblance to Phrenitis; being considered a disease of a very high grade of inflammatory action, the most rigorous antiphlogistic measures were used. This practice however, was attended with the utmost fatality, & very few recovered under it. So much was this the case, that Dr. Sutton tells us he was informed by a physician of his acquaintance who was in the habit of pursuing it, that he experienced such want of success, "he considered almost every patient as lost, to whom he was called".

It is extremely rare that the employment of the lancet is necessary in the treatment of this affection, however much the symptoms may seem to indicate it. There may be a hot skin, full, bounding pulse, & other circumstances of this kind appearing to demand active antiphlogistic measures; but excepting in persons of robust & plethoric habit, depletion by the lancet may be attended

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with fatal consequences, & even in persons of this description, its place may generally be supplied by other less hazardous measures. In the generality of instances the heat of skin & other febrile symptoms may be allayed sufficiently by the exhibition of an Emetic, which may serve to cleanse the stomach (the foul state of which must tend very much to keep up the irritation) & at the same time it reduces the fever. In conjunction with this, the shower bath & spirituous fomentations to the surface may be employed with very great effect. The very decided effects of the shower bath I have witnessed in the Alms-house in the practice of Dr. Hodge. Depletion by means of Cups, & blisters to the head may also sometimes be used with advantage. In very many instances however, the indications for these measures are not so obvious, & the skin instead of being hot & dry, is moist & of a natural temperature, & there are evident

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marks of prostration. In such cases, the practice which appears to be most approved, & which is in general use, is, to commence with the exhibition of Opium in as large doses as the system will bear, which are continued until sleep is induced. It may be well in cases where there is not too great prostration to precede this by an Emetic, which may arouse the Stomach from its torpor, & facilitate the operation of the Opium. In combination with this it is necessary to exhibit regularly some of the more stimulating tonics (as in persons who have been long accustomed to stimulate, ardent spirits may be found more effectual) in order to support the strength of the system; the quantity of these to be regulated by their effects.

The doses of Opium which have been given in this disease, are far greater than have been ventured on in the generality of cases to

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which it is adapted. There is a torpidity prevailing which resists in a wonderful manner its operation, & tends to keep up that morbid vigilance which so constantly attends the complaint, without overcoming which a cure cannot be hoped for.

In the greater number of cases, when a calm & quiet sleep can be procured, the patient awakes in every respect improved; his delirium is less, or perhaps his mind is entirely restored to reason; he is free from every other distressing symptom, & from that moment his convalescence may be dated. It is therefore usual with most physicians to go on increasing the quantity of Opium exhibiting it at short intervals, as long as there is any hope of its producing the desired effect.

Some of the most respectable practitioners are opposed however, to the Opium practice pushe-

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ed to the extent which many advocate. Dr. Armstrong observes that, "however efficacious Opium may be under judicious management, he has seen enough & heard enough, to be fully convinced, that it is a very perilous practice to administer it in too large & repeated doses, since apoplexy, coma, or convulsions may be thereby produced." And Dr. Parrish of this city, after giving Opium in pretty large doses for some time, & finding its effects still opposed, proposes shaving the head & applying a blister to giving the enormous doses often recommended.

The professor of Practice in one University recommends uniting Camphor with the Opium, & thinks it peculiarly adapted to cases "where there is a dry tongue, hot skin, suffused countenance, contracted pupil, nervous tremors, subsultus tendinum, & low, muttering delirium."

At the same time that the above measures are employed, the room of the patient is to be dark-

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ened, & kept perfectly still in order to invite sleep. After this most desirable end is accomplished, the strength of the patient is to be supported by a nourishing & rather stimulating diet.

The practice however, above detailed, has been varied in different ways by the different practitioners whose attention has been more particularly attracted by this disease. Dr. Armstrong, who has given us quite an elaborate treatise on the subject, was in the habit of commencing the treatment (where he judged venaesection improper) by opening the bowels with moderate doses of Calomel, Jalap, & Sulphate of Magnesia, supporting the strength during the operation with an "occasional draught of warm negus"; he then ordered two or three gallons of tepid water, strongly impregnated with salt, to be thrown over the body, which is then to be dried & rubbed with flannels. The patient was

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afterwards put to bed, & forty or fifty drops of Laudanum were given in some warm wine. This treatment he often found to answer without any thing else; but in the generality of instances, he found it necessary to follow it up with small doses of Calomel & Opium, which were repeated at intervals, until the effects of the Calomel were exhibited on the gums & salivary organs.

The authority whence this practice comes is certainly very high, & no doubt the success of it in the hands of its author warranted the encomiums which he has bestowed upon it; but it has not met with such general approbation as to induce most practitioners to pursue it implicitly. Dr. Armstrong, united Calomel with the Opium, & urged it to salivation with a view to "equalising the circulation", considering venous congestion as having very great influence in the production of the disease. But the apoplectic symptoms

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which are usually present towards the close of a fatal case, would warrant the conclusion that these congestions are rather a consequence of the disease, & generally occur in the last stages; & it is probable that very many of the cases which were treated in this way by the author above alluded to, would have recovered without the aid of the Calomel. Besides this, the state of the system in these cases is unfavorable to the employment of cleansing; & excepting in cases where the Liver is much involved, there is no very obvious indication for it.

The same author likewise recommends very highly the use of cold affusions, & that in cases where the surface is covered with perspiration, & of a low temperature. This remedy however, is more frequently employed where the skin is hot & dry, & there is high fever.

Another practice which has been broached within a few years, & which originated with Dr. Hlaff

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of this city, is that of treating the disease principally by the employment of Emetics. This gentleman was led to view this complaint as one of gastric origin, from having observed in several instances very beneficial effects result from the occurrence of spontaneous vomiting; & was induced to imitate nature in this respect by employing artificial means. Accordingly the effects were as he had anticipated, & he was so much pleased with the practice that he adopted it in general.

There is certainly a very foul state of the stomach & alimentary canal present in these cases, & without doubt in very many instances the operation of an Emetic would be attended with salutary consequences, both as cleansing the first passages, & operating beneficially on the nervous system; but such is the prostrated state of the system very often, that it might very well be supposed an indiscriminate use of

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the remedy might be prejudicial. And we have no very good proof of its necessity in every case, as very many recover without it.

Evacuations of any kind, in this disease cannot be carried to a very great extent. Excepting in the early stages, & in persons of robust constitution, Purgatives cannot be employed with safety, & in by far the greater number of instances, it is sufficient to keep the bowels open with mild laxatives, & in the advanced stages, glysters must be substituted.

In Mania à Potu however, as in most other diseases, almost every physician has a peculiar method of practice, which he prefers, either because it has originated with himself, or because it has happened to be adapted to the cases which have come under his notice. All these different measures are without doubt useful in their proper place; but no one of them

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It is only by attending to the state of the system, watching the symptoms as they arise, & adapting remedies to the circumstances of each case, that any man can hope to practice with success.

And he who is thus careful with respect to these circumstances, & pursues this just & philosophic course, will alone reap the well-earned fruits of his exertions, & rise an ornament to his profession, & an useful citizen of his Country. — — — — — — — — —

End.